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THREE DIALOGUES

ON

THE CORN LAWS,

BETWEEN

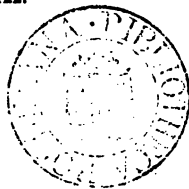
A CLERGYMAN AND A PARISHIONER.

BY THE

REV. FRANCIS LITCHFIELD,

RECTOR OF FAETHINGHOLE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

"Ye little know what ills ye court,
When *changes* are your wish."—BURNS.



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1839.

201.

TO THE READER.

THESE Dialogues represent with additions a conversation that actually took place at a meeting between the Depositors of my Clothing Club and myself, in the month of February. As such, they may possibly prove useful to gentlemen, clergymen, farmers, and others, desirous of guarding the labourers of England against the delusive, and—if not obviated—destructive cry of “CHEAP BREAD.” It is often a difficult thing to ascertain, according to the order in which they arise, the statements formed by men so imperfectly educated as the agricultural labourers, on such an important and personal matter as the Corn Laws. It is perhaps scarcely less difficult to some, to know the proper way of answering objections, and of remedying errors, to which ignorance in such a case too commonly gives birth. These considerations have induced me to profit by the opportunity presented me, and, with a view to wider usefulness, to publish the results of my own experience. Some persons may think that the argument of these Dialogues might have been better arranged, and more strongly put. I have no doubt of it, and shall be glad to see it done. Indeed, I would have done it myself had I been able, or had time, which happened to press, permitted. Others may think that some topics have been omitted that might have been properly introduced, and some perhaps introduced that might better have been excluded. To that I assent as both possible and probable, but with this remark, that in conversing with the labouring poor, care should be taken not to oppress them with matter beyond their comprehension, and especially not to bewilder their minds with intricate statements, calculations of figures, and such terms as ‘chambers of commerce,’ ‘exports’ and ‘imports,’ ‘graduated scales’ and so forth. As to the language of these Dialogues it may perhaps not seem plain enough. The truth is, few persons

that have not made the attempt can have a notion, how difficult it is in writing a Dialogue of this kind, to make the questions and answers sufficiently simple, short, natural, and connected. I mention this, as an excuse for imperfections that will probably appear to many, and also on the other hand, as a caution to persons who in preferring a different language and method of expression, may miss the mark of a labourer's mind, and thus fail altogether in attaining the desired object.

Some persons may think a regular address to the poor man preferable on a matter so interesting to him as the Corn Law question. I do not agree in this. I am convinced that till successive questions have elicited a labourer's thoughts, no person is competent to construct an address properly adapted to them. And, after all, some expression may occur in the outset of such an address that, by not being rightly understood, or not agreed to, may render the remainder of such an appeal altogether ineffectual. This may be the case, however much a labourer, in deference to the station of the speaker, may declare himself, or appear to be, convinced. There are persons, perhaps, who may think that the labourer requires no advice, and no information on the subject of these Dialogues. "The repeal of the Corn Laws"—they may say—"is so plainly destructive to the interests of the agricultural poor, that no man among them of common sense and the least reflection can fail to perceive it." From the opinions of such persons I totally and strongly dissent. The labouring poor feel much more than they reason, and every person of observation must have remarked that in the newspapers and speeches of the Anti-Corn Law advocates, a cry, or a strong assertion, and not an argument, has been chiefly attempted, as indeed is almost uniformly the case in every democratic appeal to the humbler classes of society. But, that I might convince myself how the matter really stood respecting the labourer, I have lately examined, at the Journal Office of the House of Commons, the various Petitions for and against the Repeal of the Corn Laws, that have proceeded from that part of the country in which I reside—a district, be it observed, almost purely agricultural. What has been the result? Why, that the signatures and marks of agricultural labourers have been far more numerous in

favour of altering the Corn Laws, than against it. No doubt much of this may be attributed to the fact, that the farmers have not attempted to obtain the signatures of their labours, and have even (unwisely I think) refused marks when offered. But, on the other hand, I would ask, whether signatures gained by mere request, still more by compulsion, could be depended on in case of that encreased agitation with which the manufacturers, backed, I am grieved and ashamed to see, by some of Her Majesty's Ministers, are now threatening the country. I must say, I think not, unless the farmer (which rarely happens) has first made himself well acquainted with the subject, so as to explain it fully to the satisfaction of the labouring man. I say, I think not, and, as one of those who are convinced that the Corn Law Agitation has too many *party* as well as irreligious and republican objects in view, to be easily abandoned, I confess myself extremely anxious that every endeavour should be made to place the question not only before the labourer but the *farmer*, in such a popular and familiar form, that the tone of conversation in the public houses and in private society in humble life, may at once be leavened against repeal. This has been my motive for publishing these Dialogues, and in their present cheap form, as well as for now prefixing an address, of which the object is to induce others to act upon the plan I recommend, and to place these Dialogues, if approved, as widely as possible before the eye of the farmer and the labouring man. That the case of destitution here supposed, is carried to the furthest limits, is acknowledged. But so also is that put by the Manufacturers which it is intended to meet, who seldom fail to paint in the strongest colours, the future distress of the country, provided their Petitions are not acceded to, or rather, if their *threats* are not regarded. With more moderate opponents I would claim a right to insist, that the tendency of any diminution of that necessary protection which is now enjoyed by the Farmer, is to produce more or less such a state of things as I have here described, in proportion as foreign corn is found to supersede what is now grown by means of English and *Irish* labourers at home.

FRANCIS LITCHFIELD.

Farthinghoe Rectory, March 26th, 1839.

CORN LAWS AND THE POOR.

DIALOGUE FIRST.

Between the Rector of Farthinghoe and Richard Newman, a Parishioner, in the room of the Clothing Club, with all the Depositors assembled.

Richard Newman.—Please sir, if I may be so bold as to ask, we should all of us like to know what you think about the Corn Law?

Rector.—I will tell you, Richard, with a great deal of pleasure. In the first place, I think, there is nothing so difficult to make as a good Corn Law, and that nothing is so valuable to a poor man when it is made. The Corn Law of a country may be said to fix the price of all that the poor man buys and sells.

Richard.—Sells, sir! A poor man has'nt much to sell. I wish he had.

Rector.—Indeed, Richard, he has, and is always at market with it.

Richard.—How, Sir?

Rector.—Why he sells his labour every day to those that want it, and to those that will pay him the best for it. The money he gets for his labour he lays out in paying for his food, his firing, his clothing, and his cottage. Thus, the more he receives, the more he will have to buy with. Is it not so?

Richard.—Why, yes, I can't say but it is.

Rector.—Thus, you see, Richard, that a good Corn Law is every thing to a poor man. He finds it out every day first in his wages, and then in all that he eats, and drinks, and feels, and wears, that are bought by his wages.

Richard.—Then I'm sure a poor man ought to have the best Corn Law that can be made.

Rector.—Yes, Richard, and when the Poor have got a good Corn Law, they should be cautious how they give it up again. There's an old and prudent saying, "*Let well alone.*" Did you ever hear of the man that died because he was not contented with being well?

Richard.—No, Sir, how came that about?

Rector.—It was in this way. He took physic when he didn't want it, and it killed him. An epitaph on his tombstone tells everybody what a simpleton he was, in these words—"I was well—would be better—and so here I am."

Richard.—Oh! I know what you mean, Sir. But they say the Corn Laws arn't so good as they should be.

Rector.—Perhaps not. I know nothing that is quite so good as it should be, or rather as we would wish it to be. But that is not the question. The question is, whether the Corn Law is as good as our Rulers can make it.

Richard.—Folks say, that if the Law was better we shouldn't have bread so dear as it is.

Rector.—I don't think they are very wise persons that say that. Men can make a law, but men can't make a harvest. Corn must be dearer after a bad harvest than after a good one, just as you get more pay when there are few labourers than when there are a great many.

Richard.—But when the harvest has been a bad one, I don't see, Sir, why we shouldn't have corn from abroad. They say we ought?

Rector.—So we ought, Richard, and so we have. The Ports are all open now, and everybody that likes to bring corn to this country can do so. But corn, you see, is dear for all that.

Richard.—What's the meaning of it?

Rector.—I'll tell you. When the harvests are bad in England, they are almost always bad abroad at the same time, besides, that some countries, like France, won't let their corn come away when it is scarce. Thus, you see, as corn varies in quantity, it must vary in price, some years cheaper than others, some years dearer. It seems to be God's law that it should be so, and if so, of course no law of man can prevent it.

Richard.—Well! All I know is, that people arn't so well satisfied as they used to be.

Rector.—Possibly not, Richard. People are seldom so

well satisfied with a bad harvest as with a good one, and when the price of corn rises after a bad season, we generally hear people crying out against the corn laws.

Richard.—They are crying out enough now, in some parts, I hear.

Rector.—Very likely. We are apt to be unthankful for good harvests. No wonder then we murmur under bad ones, and complain as if the laws were in fault for that which God has ordained.

Richard.—That's all very true. But folks say, we might have better Corn Laws than we have.

Rector.—I dare say they do. Foolish and ignorant as well as wicked men say this of every law, however good it may be, particularly of every corn law. The fact is, nothing is so easy as boasting, and nothing, therefore, so common. But, do you really think, Richard, that the men that abuse this law, can make a better? I don't.

Richard.—Perhaps not. At any rate, I wish they would if they could.

Rector.—But they can't do it, Richard, and let me tell you, that a perfect Corn Law, to suit every body, and please every body, for all years, and all harvests, can never be made, let silly men talk as they please about it. If it could be done, depend upon it, it would have been done before this.

Richard.—I should think so. Poor people hadn't need be poorer.

Rector.—Certainly not, and no Christian man wishes it. But is it likely, Richard, that a Corn Law could be invented, that in good years, and bad years, and midling years, would make all men equally prosperous, equally happy, and equally contented?

Richard.—I'm sure I could'nt make one. But I should like to see it done, if it could be. Poor folks are always badly off, and we want better laws bad enough,

Rector.—Want them? To be sure we do, in this and many cases. And why have we not got them, since so many good and great men are constantly trying to make them for us? I will tell you why. It is because man is not equal with God, and because man with an imperfect mind cannot make a perfect law. And now, Richard, let me ask you a question. If any body was to propose to make a new law for

regulating the price of corn, do you think you could tell whether it would turn out a good law, or a bad one?

Richard.—Oh! no Sir. How should I know anything about it? All I want is a bellyful of victuals for myself, my wife, and children, and money to pay my way. The law that will give me that is the law for me.

Rector.—No doubt, you have many things to buy besides corn; but the difficulty is how to make such a law, that, as I have said, will work equally well for all sorts of people in all sorts of years. And now, Richard, let me ask you another question.

Richard.—What's that, Sir?

Rector.—This is my question, Richard. If any one was to propose to change the present corn law for another, do you think you could tell whether it would work better for the poor man than what he has, or work as well, or, indeed, whether it would not do him a great deal of harm?

Richard.—Why no, how should I, Sir? The folks in the Parliament House ought to make better laws than we have got; and I can't think why they have not done it afore this. But they say it is to be done now, and no matter how soon.

Rector.—Who is to do it, Richard?

Richard.—I don't know, Sir. But somebody I supposed. At least there's a great talk about it.

Rector.—Just so. There is a great talk about many things. I never knew a time when there was so much talking. But your talking men, Richard, are seldom to be depended on, and least of all those men that talk about what they do not understand. The Talkers have had it all their own way, in and out of Parliament, for several years; but without doing any good, that I can see. Every thing has been changed and nothing has been improved, every body has been harassed and nobody made the better for it. At last they have begun, I see, to talk about the Corn laws, and to tell the people what has been said over and over again for hundreds of years, that they (the Talkers) are going at last to make a law for cheap bread.

Richard.—Well! After all there is nothing like cheap bread, and I've heard say that, if the present Corn Laws were done away with altogether, the loaf would be as large again, and twice as cheap.

Rector.—Do you believe all you hear people say, Richard? Were you not told the same story about cheap bread years and years ago?

Richard.—I can't say but I did hear it long enough ago. But they say it really is to happen now.

Rector.—But do you believe what the Talkers say to be true? I should think not, for you have lived long enough to know, that when wicked men are anxious to use poor people as their tools, they always promise them cheap bread, and a large loaf.

Richard.—To be sure that is always the case. But then they say, that the Manufacturers are determined to make the farmers give labourers cheap bread, and that the Manufacturers are our friends.

Rector.—Indeed! Then the case is quite a new one. The Manufacturers have never been very famous for loving or befriending the poor. On the contrary, they make poor little children in the hot and unhealthy factories, work summer and winter so hard, and on such low wages, that a law has lately been passed to stop their cruelties.

Richard.—If that is the case they can't be friends to poor folks.

Rector.—It is the case, and children in the cotton mills have been made, and are now I fear sometimes made, to work sixteen hours a day.

Richard.—Shameful!

Rector.—In agricultural districts the farmers usually raise or lower the wages of their men in some degree according to the price of corn. Thus, whether corn be dear or cheap, a poor man's family does not feel much difference, though he does a little. Besides this, a farming labourer is generally employed throughout the entire year, and often when the farmer does not want him.

Richard.—So much the better for the poor man.

Rector.—Very well. But see how it is at the mills and factories. A manufacturer thinks of nothing so much as of grinding the poor man down to the lowest wages, and of sending him adrift, to be maintained by the agriculturists, for days, weeks, and even months, as soon as he does'nt want him.

Richard.—Then he is no Christian.

Rector.—Stop, Richard. I do not think you ought to say

he is no Christian for this. But certain it is, that a manufacturer has not so much kind feeling for his workmen as the farmer has for his labourers. A farmer is always on the spot, and his family have perhaps lived on the farm he occupies for a hundred years or more. He knows his labourers, and has known their fathers and grandfathers, and, although he must make a rent before he can pay it, still he likes to stand well with his men, and to be beloved and respected. Besides this, if a farmer used his labourers ill, the landlord would turn him out of his farm, or insist upon his acting justly and kindly.

Richard.—Serve him right too.

Rector.—But the manufacturer is a different sort of a person. He has no master to check him in severity. He often comes from nobody knows where, and lives a great way from his factory. He never works himself, and doesn't care what people think of him, so he can but get money. If his business does not quite answer, he goes away, and nobody hears any more about him. He is scarcely to be considered an Englishman, for he says, "he owes no allegiance to the shores of England," and, in truth, he can carry away his money with him, as soon as he has got it, to France, or any other nation, without giving employ to a single Englishman.

Richard.—More's the pity that such fellows should have money. They should not hurt the farmers if I had my way.

Rector.—The manufacturer being the sort of man I have described to you, tries to get rich as fast as he can, however cruelly, and is never satisfied. He has for several years been making thirty per cent. of his money, that is, he gains thirty pounds upon every hundred he lays out, whilst the landlord only gets three per cent., and the farmer has done little more than pay every body his own. Did you ever hear how much a manufacturer can make in the course of twenty or thirty years?

Richard.—No, sir; but I hear they often get money as if they were coining it.

Rector.—Why, often it is almost as if it was so. It is not at all an uncommon thing for a manufacturer to make a hundred or two hundred thousand pounds, and several have been known to make nearly, or even above a million.

Richard.—A million! What's that, Sir!

Rector.—Why as much as would buy all the land and all the houses in this and nine other parishes of the same size, or as would buy this parish ten times over. Now, nobody ever heard of a landed proprietor encreasing property in that way by means of his profits.

Richard.—No. I should think not.

Rector.—Yet, would you believe it, the manufacturer is discontented! He is doing it seems as much work as ever, and selling as many goods. But lest he should by chance make less profit hereafter, he proposes to sacrifice the welfare of the whole agricultural body, landlord, tenant, labourer, and every body else connected with the land.

Richard.—But I don't see why the land should be ruined for the sake of the manufacturer. "*Live and let live*," is my motto for everybody.

Rector.—Very true, Richard, and all this sacrifice is demanded for the sake of *foreign* trade too. For my part, if either foreign trade, or the landed interest of England must be given up, I should say, give up foreign trade, and keep the landed interest. But it is not necessary that either should be given up, and we see how rich the Manufacturers have been getting by things as they have been, and under the corn laws as they are.

Richard.—But, Sir, how does the Manufacturer get money so fast, when the people on the land get it so slow?

Rector.—By paying no taxes and screwing down the wages of his men. For this purpose he tries to tempt as many workmen as possible into his power, so that they may be rivals to each other for employ. When he has done this he makes his own terms, and never, in such a case as this, is the labourer of a manufacturer so well off for pay as the labourer of a farmer. Besides, the manufacturing labourer has no comforts. Plenty of pale faces, plenty of crooked limbs, plenty of consumption; but no nice cottage to himself, no garden, no land allotment, no pig, no clothing-club, no gift of coal.

Richard.—Well! I should not much like that. But it stands to reason, that a labouring man must be better off when he pays thirty-two shillings a quarter for wheat, as they say it is to be, than when he pays fifty four, which till this year has been about the common price. Four shillings

a bushel must be better than six-and-sixpence. He must get a better belly full *then*, however, though the farmer may not make so much profit, and why should he?

Rector.—I do not think, Richard, you can mention any farmer that makes much of a profit when wheat is at fifty-four shillings. Besides, I am convinced that when the farmer is doing well, the labourer thrives. It is never worth a farmer's while to let his money lie idle, so that the richer he gets, the more he will lay out on his farm, by draining and other improvements. Besides, Richard, it must surely be for the interest of the agricultural labourer, that his neighbours should be well off, instead of letting them be ruined by distant and cold-blooded manufacturers.

Richard.—All that's right enough. There's no gainsaying that. The more money for the master the more work for the man.

Rector.—Few things delight me more than to see our boys and girls, apprentices and servants, come home to our village feast every year. They look so respectable in their dress, and are so happy and cheerful, that it quite gladdens my heart when they come down to the Rectory to give an account of their past service, and of their plans for the coming year. It would seriously grieve me to have all those young persons discharged, because their masters were unable to keep servants, and by coming home be compelled to take bread out of their parents' mouths.

Richard.—Ah! sir. That would be a bad business. But I don't see why selling wheat at thirty-two shillings a quarter should bring every girl home from service.

Rector.—I will explain all that at our next meeting. In the meantime let me tell you, Richard, how glad I am to hear you speak out in this way. My object in talking to you all in this room is, to learn what you think. I rejoice, therefore, when you express your thoughts so fully, and freely, and without being afraid of me. I am thus enabled to know your opinions, and where you are in error to convince you of it. This is not the first time by a great many that I have had this sort of conversation with you. Never, however, have I discussed a matter of greater importance both to your spiritual and temporal concerns. This you will begin to see at our next meeting, when I show you your mistake about the price of corn.

Richard.—I am sure we ought to thank you, Sir. It is not likely that poor folks who get up early in the morning to work, and go to bed tired at night, should be able to read, or to hear, or to know what is best. It is a great thing to have a friend to tell us, and if you are not to be depended on, I don't know who is.

Rector.—You speak very properly, and I shall be most anxious to explain to you the way, in which, according to my judgment, the poor agricultural labourer of this country would be rendered perfectly destitute, and miserable, by a repeal of the Corn Laws. I will do so next week. Till then farewell.

DIALOGUE SECOND.

The Rector having met the Depositors assembled in the Club Room, addressed them, and was answered as follows :

Rector.—Is Richard Newman here?

Richard Newman.—Yes, sir, we're all here I believe to day.

Rector.—I am glad of it, first, because I rejoice that no one will have to pay a half-penny forfeit next week for not now depositing, and secondly, because I wish to explain what it is of the utmost importance for you all as agricultural labourers to understand. You said last week, Richard Newman, that "it stood to reason a labouring man must be better off with wheat at 32s. a quarter, than with wheat at 54s." I then promised to shew you your mistake.

Richard.—Well, Sir, I shall be glad to hear you. But I think you will find it hard work to convince me that I should not be better off. It certainly must stand to reason that 32s. is better than 54s., and 4s. a bushel than 6s. 6d.

Rector.—It stands to your feelings, Richard, and to your first view of the subject, that the case must be so. But, I do not think it stands to reason. To reason is to enquire, and to reflect, to look backward, and to look forward, to consider, and to calculate, and then to judge of what is reasonable. Now, I very much doubt whether you have done so. Have you, Richard?

Richard.—Why, no Sir, I can't say I have. But, it don't require much thought. I think a man that pays 32s. *must* be better off than a man that pays 54s.

Rector.—Now hear me, Richard. That labouring men are not *always* well off when wheat is sold for 32s. a quarter,

appears from this, that in the countries where wheat fetches only that sum, and even less, the poor are in the most miserable condition. Were you aware of that, Richard?

Richard.—No, Sir.

Rector.—Then here is *one* proof that you did not reason, or that, if you did reason, you had not knowledge enough to reason from. Again, it is a fact, that in this country, where wheat is now selling at 72s. a quarter, the poor are in all respects better off than in countries where the wheat is sold for 32s. Were you aware of that fact, Richard?

Richard.—No, Sir, that I wasn't. I never was abroad like you. No doubt you've seen what you speak of.

Rector.—I have. I have travelled through all the great corn countries, where the wheat is sold for 32s. and even for less. I have seen the state of the Poor there, and I can truly say, Richard, that the parish in which you and I are living, has comforts such as the labouring classes in Russia and Poland have no notion of.

Richard.—Is that so, Sir?

Rector.—It is, Richard. You English labourers, I rejoice to think, almost always eat bread made of good wheat. But the Poles and Russians, and indeed, all the labouring poor where wheat is sold at even less than four shillings a bushel, can't afford to eat wheat bread.

Richard.—What do they eat, then?

Rector.—Their wages are so low, they are obliged to live on bread made of *barley*! The manufacturers would make the agricultural labourers in England do the same thing. How should you like that, Richard?

Richard.—Not at all. We had'nt need be worse of than we are.

Rector.—Here, then, is a *second* proof that the lowest price for wheat is not necessarily, or according to reason, the best for a labouring man. To show this still further, I may mention, that in Ireland a man can buy corn and butchers' meat cheaper than in England. Yet an Irish labourer is never well off till he comes to England, where things are dearer.

Richard.—That's all true, and I wish the Irish were made to stop at home, instead of coming to England, and beating

down wages as they do. Still, I should like to have wheat sold for 32s. a quarter, it would be so nice to have a good bellyfull. There is nothing after all like a good bellyfull.

Rector.—You speak as you feel, Richard, and I do not wonder at it. Indeed, I wish it as much, or almost as much as you, for nothing would distress me more than to see any of you without food, or, indeed, without enough of it. It is principally for that reason, that I am anxious to see the present corn laws remain as they *are*, and unaltered.

Richard.—What ! Sir, and not let us have a bellyfull !

Rector.—Oh ! yes, remember I wish you to have a bellyfull. And now let me ask you another question. Do you think the farmers in this country could afford to grow wheat for 32s. a quarter ?

Richard.—Perhaps not. But that is no reason, why poor folks should not have it brought from abroad and buy it as cheap as they can get it.

Rector.—How should you like to have a hundred Irishmen come here, and to see them employed to do all the work in this parish at a cheaper rate than you, whilst you were turned off and told you were not wanted ?

Richard.—Not at all. We would soon bundle 'em out again, or have a fight for it.

Rector.—That would be wrong, but how should you like to see a hundred Russians come over then ?

Richard.—We would'nt have them at any price. It is very hard if Englishmen mayn't do the work for England, without having Foreigners brought in to take our food out of our mouths.

Rector.—I think so too. Now, then, let me ask you, who would be employed to raise the foreign corn that you would buy from abroad ? Would not the ploughing, the sowing, the harrowing, the weeding, the reaping, the carrying and the thrashing of Russian and Polish Wheat—in short, would not all the work you now do, be done by Russian and Polish Labourers ?

Richard.—To be sure it would be, Sir. I never thought of that.

Rector.—Would that be good for you, and help you to a bellyfull ?

Richard.—Why, I can't say it would. I am afraid it would take one away, for we should get no work then.

Rector.—(Smiling)—But what would that signify, Richard, so long as wheat was 32s. a quarter? It “stands to reason,” you know, that you could not be badly off with wheat at that price.

Richard.—Oh! Sir, but I never meant that we were to be without work and without money. The case would be altered then. Wheat's dear if you can't get it, be the price what it may, everybody knows that.

Rector.—Let us now go on with the argument. Who would in such a case make the ploughs, the drills, the harrows, the spades, the hoes, the sickles, the flails, the harness, the wagons, and so forth?

Richard.—Why, to be sure, we should not want them, nor barns, nor perhaps farm houses long. The corn would be raised and got in with Russian and Polish tools, I suppose.

Rector.—To be sure it would, and, in that case, what would become of every tradesman in this parish, the mason, the carpenter, blacksmith, wheelwright, draper, grocer, baker, maltster, shoemaker, tailor, and even the publican, at whose house, I am sorry to say, some men now spend too much of their money?

Richard.—They would have no custom, and would not be wanted.

Rector.—And, if the farmers could not grow corn without losing by it, what would they do with their farms?

Richard.—Throw up their plough land, I suppose, and keep only the grass.

Rector.—But is it not the ploughed land that finds nearly all the work?

Richard.—That's true enough.

Rector.—And the worst ploughed land finds the most work, don't it?

Richard.—No doubt, and that would be given up first, and the next afterwards.

Rector.—In that case, who would find the labourers in this parish any work?

Richard.—Why, nobody except on the grass land. There would'nt be any work wanted. We should be in a very

nice mess then. We should then be worse off than ever, shouldn't we?

Rector.—What, with wheat at 32s. a-quarter? It "stands to reason" you know, you couldn't be.

Richard.—Oh! I begin to think differently about that.

Rector.—Well, now for the grass farms. Many parishes are all under the plough. Ours is not, and has a good deal of grass land in it. Now, let me ask, do you think it would be worth a Farmer's while to keep sheep, if he had no plough land to feed them on turnips, or to fold them on for manure, or if nobody that now occupies plough land was likely to buy the sheep he might breed?

Richard.—No. I can't think he would, and if he did not keep sheep, a good deal of his grass land would soon be worth but little. But he might keep beasts on the best and.

Rector.—If he did, he would not want many labourers. Besides, do you think, if a Grazier had to pay all the rates of the Parish, and maintain all the Poor that are now employed on the plough-land in his own and the neighbouring parishes, he could make any profit, particularly when he had to pay a great deal more in taxes and tithes, in proportion to what he got, than he does now?

Richard.—Perhaps not, unless he got a good price for his meat?

Rector.—A good price can only be got when there are plenty of customers, and I know not where his customers would come from. Could any meat be bought by the Poor or the Tradesmen of this Parish, when, as you have seen, they would all be ruined?

Richard.—Oh! no. That couldn't be. They must come from other Parishes.

Rector.—But, Richard, if the Labourers and Tradesmen of this parish were thrown out of work and ruined, why shouldn't the same thing happen in every other Agricultural parish?

Richard.—I don't see why not. It must be so, I suppose.

Rector.—To be sure it must. Then in that case what would become of the Labourers and Tradesmen in the towns of Banbury and Brackley, and all such towns,

even Northampton and London, to whom surrounding villages now give custom ?

Richard.—Why, they must be ruined too, for they would have no customers.

Rector.—Would that improve the price of butchers' meat ?

Richard.—Oh ! no. Nobody in these parts would buy much butchers' meat then.

Rector.—Then what would become of the grass farms ?

Richard.—They must go too.

Rector.—No doubt they must, and, if the tradesmen of Banbury and Brackley were to be ruined, as you say, what would they have to live upon, or to lay out with Tradesmen and Manufacturers elsewhere ?

Richard.—Why, in that case, I suppose, they would have to live on what they've got. I suppose some of 'em have put their money out at interest, they must fetch it in. Some have put money in the Savings' Bank, they must call it out.

Rector.—That's easier said than done, Richard. Money put out at interest, you know, is money lent to be used. Suppose any farmer to have borrowed such money, could he repay it when he was ruined ?

Richard.—No. I don't see how he could. To be sure he might be sold up.

Rector.—But, suppose him to be sold up, what then ? His wagons and tools would fetch nothing, for nobody would want them, and if he had anything that anybody wanted, nobody would have money to buy it with ; for, you know, all the people in the Agricultural Districts, Landlords, Farmers, Labourers, and Tradesmen, would be ruined by the same process, and at the same time.

Richard.—Oh ! I forgot that. Why then there would only be the Savings' Bank to go to.

Rector.—But, what would be the use of going there ? I don't wish to alarm you, Richard. But I must tell you that, if wheat were to fall to 32s. and everybody were to be ruined, the Savings' Bank would fall next. No interest could be paid in that case.

Richard.—How's that ? We have been promised that interest should always be paid.

Rector.—Yes, Richard. But how could that be, supposing everybody that pays taxes to be ruined ? How do you think

the money is raised that pays the interest on money put into the Savings' Bank?

Richard.—It comes from London, they say.

Rector.—Yes. But how does it get to London? I'll tell you. The tax-gatherer collects it in the form of taxes, so that, when I pay taxes for my windows, my horses, and dogs, I'm paying what is afterwards paid as interest to the Depositors in the Savings' Banks.

Richard.—Ah! I see it now. Then the interest would be paid in that way.

Rector.—No such thing. If I was to be ruined, I could pay no taxes, for I could keep no horses, and no anything on which taxes would be charged. This would be the case with every other person in this part of the country. Besides, let me inform you, Richard, that the land pays nearly all the taxes, so that, if the land were thrown out of cultivation, there would be no taxes, and no excise duties, and no customs, and no interest therefore paid for money put into the Savings' Bank.

Richard.—That would be another nice mess to some folks, however. Well! I know what I'd do in that case. I'd be off quick enough to Banbury, if I'd any money there, and fetch it all out, and live on it as long as it lasted. It would do no good in the Savings' Bank, if there was no interest paid on it.

Rector.—But, Richard, if the Interest was lost for want of taxes, the Principal would be lost too. The money paid in taxes, pays both or neither. The same thing is true of the Funded property in London, of which you have probably never heard. All would go to smash, so that nobody would have any money to pay or receive.

Richard.—The bankers would be the only people with any money then.

Rector.—There, Richard, you're wrong again. The bankers don't make money. They receive it from one man, and lend it at a profit when received to another. If every body was ruined, nobody could take any money to the banker, who would then have no more money to lend. But the banker would be worse off than this. For nobody could repay him the money he had lent on mortgage or bills, so that

when required to pay what had been placed in his hands, he would be unable to do so, and would be ruined like the rest.

Richard.—Then how would anybody pay his way in this part of the country?

Rector.—Nobody could, as the manufacturers and workmen of goods now sold to the agriculturist would soon find to their cost. Every body in the agricultural parts of England, would become bankrupt. Nobody could pay his debts, and as nobody could pay debts, nobody would be trusted. In this way even gentlemen that now have large fortunes, would be ruined, for they would get no rent for their land, and no money from the funds, and could borrow none from any bank. They would, therefore, instantly get rid of all their carriages, horses and dogs, and turn off all their servants and labourers. Farmers would, of course, do the same thing, not only in this, but in every parish in this part of England.

Richard.—To be sure they would, if they couldn't maintain them, more's the pity!

Rector.—Yes! And tradesmen to whom our boys have been bound apprentices, would send them home for want of work to employ, and food to maintain them.

Richard.—That can't be denied.

Rector.—Well, then, you see now, Richard, that I was right when I said, that all your boys and girls that are now out at service, would be sent home, if wheat were to sink to 32s. a quarter, or four shillings per bushel.

Richard.—Well, to be sure, how odd it all seems to come round. You did say so, and I could'n't see how it was to be. But I see it now, though how we should keep them when we had no work, and no victuals for ourselves, I'm sure I can't think. The girls, to be sure, could make a little lace but not enough to maintain themselves, much less us.

Rector.—No, Richard. Lace would fetch nothing then. First, because few people could afford it, and secondly, because the duty is to be taken off wheat and lace, at the same time.

Richard.—How's that?

Rector.—The new rule proposed by the manufacturer is, that everything is to be bought where it can be had the cheapest. That is to be done, no matter how many English

labourers or mechanics are thrown out of employ. Wheat, lace, silk, ribbons, leather, gloves, stockings, all are to be made abroad by foreign workmen, if they will work cheaper than the English.

Richard.—That had'nt ought to be.

Rector.—So I think. But the manufacturer is trying to frighten us all into it. In such a case, women would of course buy foreign lace, which is better, so that your girls could earn nothing. What would you do then?

Richard.—All go to the workhouse. We could'nt be off of it.

Rector.—No, Richard, there would be no Workhouses then. Much as you may dislike workhouses now, and sorry as I should be, to see you now sent there, you would be glad enough, and so should I be, to have workhouses to receive you, if the price of corn were to sink to 32s. the quarter. But there would be no workhouses then.

Richard.—No workhouses! Why they've only just been built. Besides, there's a law about them. Perhaps you mean they would be too full. They certainly could'nt hold us all. But we should all be fed there at any rate.

Rector.—You are mistaken. But I have not time to shew you your mistake to day. We'll talk over that another time. But before we part let me ask you a question. Do you now think you should be better off with wheat at 32s. than with wheat as it is now?

Richard.—Oh! no, sir, I've long seen I was wrong in that. But I shall like to hear how it would end, and what would become of us. Who knows but we might be better off than we are after all? I don't quite give the matter up as a bad job yet.

Rector.—We shall see how that will be. However, let us now think of the clothing you are to have next winter, and for that purpose, let each one now answer his name and pay his deposit.

The list of Clothing Club Depositors was now called over, after which the party separated, to meet and finish the subject of the Corn Laws the following week.

DIALOGUE THIRD.

The Depositors of the Clothing Club having again assembled, the subject of repealing the Corn Laws, for the benefit of the Poor, was resumed as follows:—

Rector.—Well, Richard! And so your only comfort left, when no work can be found after repealing the Corn Laws, is, that you and your family will be maintained in the Workhouse! Matters will have come to a bad pass, when stout British labourers, like you, are forced to go into a Workhouse.

Richard.—I think so, indeed, Sir. I'd almost as soon die first. But if I'd no victuals for my wife and children, it could'nt be help'd, you know, Sir. Any thing's better than starving.

Rector.—Yes. But Workhouses were chiefly intended for aged people without homes, sick persons without friends, young children without protectors, and idle men without character. It has always been thought a disgrace for the able-bodied to be found in such places, and it would be sad indeed, to see a man like you there.

Richard.—But, Sir, if my family was starving, you would'nt think it disgraceful. It would be shameful for them that make the laws to take my work away. But they could'nt do less than maintain me in the Workhouse when it was gone.

Rector.—I'm afraid they would do less, Richard.

Richard.—How could they? Oh! no, Sir, that they could'nt.

Rector.—How, Richard, do you think that the Workhouses are kept up? How are the food and firing found? What pays the Master and the Matron? What provides a salary for the Chaplain, to watch the souls, and medical men, to heal the bodies of the poor?

Richard.—It all comes out of the rates and levies, I suppose.

Rector.—If then the parishes were to be ruined, as I have explained, and if, in consequence of that, no rates could be collected, don't you see that no relief could be given by the Boards of Guardians? It is true the building would still continue standing. But it would no longer be a Workhouse for the reception, and relief, of the poor.

Richard.—I never thought of that. Why, Sir, you make matters out worse and worse.

Rector.—Perhaps so. What I say, however, is very true, if the Manufacturers are right in their arguments about supplying the country with foreign corn. The last meeting of the Board of Guardians, if the lands were thrown out of cultivation, would be to turn the old, the infirm, the diseased, and the destitute, out of the walls of the workhouse, unless they chose to remain there to starve.

Richard.—The Manufacturers must be very unfeeling men to mean all that.

Rector.—I don't say they mean it. The truth is, many of them don't quite know what they mean. Thus, they are constantly contradicting each other. Some propose to repeal the Corn Laws, solely to lower the price of wages. Some say that it wouldn't lower them at all. Some say the poor land will be, and ought to be, thrown out of cultivation. Others actually pretend that its value will be increased by bringing over foreign corn.

Richard.—What nonsense they seem to talk !

Rector.—The fact is, many of them are very far from wise, and many as far from being honest, and if an honest man among them speaks truth, they hoot him, and threaten to turn him out of Parliament. The only thing they all agree about is, that there ought to be a change for their benefit, and that they will agitate and disturb the country till they get it.

Richard.—But why should such folks have it all their own way? I don't understand such things. But I can't help thinking, that the men to make the laws are they that can tell whether they will be for good or no. Not such men as the Manufacturers.

Rector.—Very true, Richard. And is it not very wicked

in these men to pretend all this time, that they are the Poor Man's friends ?

Richard.—Do they say so ?

Rector.—Yes, and that you are to be benefited by it. But hear what they say next.

Richard.—Whats that ? I shall like to know what they'll say next, though I think, if they say they are the Poor Man's Friends, they'll say anything.

Rector.—They say they'll absorb you.

Richard.—Absorb us ! How, Sir ? I never heard of poor folks being absorbed before. I'm sure I should'nt like that, but what does it mean ?

Rector.—It means, that as many men with their families as are thrown out of work and maintenance in the agricultural districts, will be immediately received and employed in the manufacturing districts.

Richard.—That's it, is it ? So we're all to go down there are we, and leave our homes where we were born and bred, and so many of us grown old ? And all for the sake of such a set of —.

Rector.—Be cool, Richard. All this will never happen, if honest and good men are but firm, and if the Poor do but keep quiet and steady, and not let themselves be led to petition for a repeal of the Corn Laws by those bad men that are going through the country, seeking whom they may deceive and betray.

Richard.—Happen, or not happen, if you please, Sir, I'd rather stay here where you are, than go down there where you are not. We should have a friend in you at all events, and I'm sure you would not see us starve, while you had anything to buy us bread with.

Rector.—Alas ! Richard, I could be of no service to you then in that way. My farm would bring me nothing ; I should get no tithe, and no interest would be paid me on the little money I have in the funds, or railway shares. I should be obliged to get a livelihood where I could, and should perhaps end my days abroad, far away from my home and native land.

Richard.—Why then, Sir, we should have no Clergyman, and no Gospel would be preached to the Poor here on Sunday.

Rector.—No, Richard, nor anywhere perhaps in these parts. But, besides this, there would be no charities—no visitings of the sick—no schools—no subscriptions to Hospitals—no Societies for building Churches, or promoting Christian Knowledge, or Propagating the Gospel abroad.

Richard.—That would be a pity, would'nt it?

Rector.—It would. But remember, Richard, that if the Gospel were to be preached in this Parish, there would be no Poor to hear it. I should'nt go till you were gone. But you would be compelled to go into the Manufacturing districts—perhaps to Manchester.

Richard.—But, Sir, supposing we went, how should we go? Should you be able to send us, and give us a little help by the way?

Rector.—I fear not, for you'd perhaps be going all at once, and I should first have spent all I had in keeping you alive. The journey would be a sad one, and I really think it would almost break my heart to see you set out upon it.

Richard.—We should have to beg our way down, should'nt we, Sir?

Rector.—Yes, Richard. But that would'nt be the worst part of it. Beggary now so shameful would be necessary then. But you'd beg, I'm afraid, without getting anything.

Richard.—Surely, Sir, poor folks would'nt be turned away from people's doors, when it was not their own fault as made 'em do it?

Rector.—I trust not. But, Richard, nobody would then have anything to give but pity. If a family were to be passing through this Parish at that time, on their way to Manchester, the Farmers, and I, and you should be gone, and if we had not set off we should have nothing to give away.

Richard.—Oh! I see. We should all be bad off, one as bad as another, and nobody with anything to spare, but the Master Manufacturers that had ruined us all.

Rector.—It would be a painful time. My blood almost boils with indignation, to think such things possible, and that men can be so very wicked as to wish for it or risk it.

Richard.—It would be very bad indeed. I'm sure I don't know what we should do.

Rector.—I've often thought of that of late, and I really don't see how any man's property, or even any man's life

would be safe. Yet I'm greatly mistaken if those men that had caused so much misery would'nt soon be number'd among the victims.

Richard.—Nobody would pity them at all events, happen what would.

Rector.—Oh! and I shudder, Richard, to think of the dreadful crimes that would be committed on roads, along which thousands and tens of thousands would then be travelling without bread, on their way to the manufacturing districts. Every house would be robbed, every village would be plundered, and every town would become a scene of confusion and riot. In this way my "sheep without their shepherd" would arrive at last in the wicked town of Manchester.

Richard.—What should we do there Sir?

Rector.—Ah! Who can say? With thousands and hundreds of thousands applying like yourselves for work, the first thing that would happen would be this. All those men, women, and children, that are now employed in manufacturing work, would immediately find their wages lowered. This alone would produce distress and discontent, that it is dreadful to think of.

Richard.—But what should I get, Sir?

Rector.—You, my poor fellow! you would get nothing. As long as manufacturing workmen could be found, no others would be employed. And when there were any others wanted, an agricultural labourer so old as you would have no chance. You and your wife, and all such as you, would not be listened to but laughed at. They would make fun of you for having wished to see wheat reduced to 32 shillings the quarter, or four shillings the bushel. They would remind you of what you said to me the other day, and say, "it stood to reason you were well off."

Richard.—I should'nt like to be made game of in that fashion. More especially, if as you say, I got no work and no bread.

Rector.—I don't think you would get any work. It is just possible your children that could work in a mill might get something for a little while.

Richard.—What would they get?

Rector.—As little as the hard-hearted mill-owner thought

it worth his while to give, and for as many hours above twelve as he chose to order. Perhaps not more than a penny a day, when so many hands were held out for it.

Richard.—A penny a day! Why they get two-pence or three-pence a day now, and that wouldn't find them in bread if I didn't earn something to make it out, let alone firing and clothing, and such like.

Rector.—Yes, Richard, and it is chiefly because the mill-owners know they can have you all in their power, that they want to repeal the Corn Laws, and get all the poor forced down into the manufacturing districts.

Richard.—But, Sir, how am I and my wife and the baby to live all this time? Where are we to sleep? How much do cottages let for down there?

Rector.—Cottages? Alas! you must bid adieu to cottages when you go from those you now live in. All you can hope for in Manchester is, to be permitted to sleep in a small dark back room at the top of a high house in some nasty street, as many as can be crammed together without bedding.

Richard.—I'm sure we shouldn't live long, nor wish it.

Rector.—I fear not.

Richard.—And what would our poor children do, with their penny a-day, after we were gone?

Rector.—Alas, Richard, you haven't heard the worst even yet.

Richard.—What! is there worse still? That's impossible.

Rector.—Yes, there is, for your children would soon be thrown out of work again. The goods made by manufacturers in England are either sold at home, or go abroad. Now, if all the agricultural classes, and others depending upon them at home were ruined, it is clear they would buy no goods made by the manufacturer. In that case the men, women, and children that make those home goods would be first put on half work, and then discharged altogether.

Richard.—That would soon happen, and then my children would be thrown out too. To be sure, they might help to make the goods that go abroad.

Rector.—Yes. But observe. When the home trade was ruined, the wages for the Foreign trade would fail, and so many fresh persons better worth having than your children would offer themselves, that they wouldn't be wanted.

Richard.—Who would have thought of that happening? But I see it might.

Rector.—Yes ; and, even supposing your children to be kept on, can you say how long the trade might last ?

Richard.—Why, I suppose, as long as the people abroad liked our goods best.

Rector.—Perhaps so ; but suppose a piece of machinery to be invented that would enable the manufacturer to do without hands !

Richard.—That ought'nt to be allowed.

Richard.—It cannot be prevented. But suppose another thing. Suppose people abroad to have as good machinery as ours. What's to prevent them from making as good cloth as ours in England, and thus ruining the trade at Manchester ?

Richard.—I don't see why they might'nt.

Rector.—Or, supposing our cloth to be better than theirs, what's to prevent them from refusing to let our cloth be sold there ? If foreigners were wise they would do this to a great extent, or, at all events, discourage our goods from going there by making it difficult, and making them dearer by a duty.

Richard.—I suppose they would, else their poor folks would be thrown out of work too.

Rector.—You're quite right. But, observe another thing. What's to prevent a war between England and Russia, and Poland, where all the corn is to come from ? In that case down goes our foreign trade, and upon a sudden again goes the price of corn, for no corn would come over in that case.

Richard.—Could that happen ?

Rector.—Could it ? Nothing so likely. Countries choose particular times for going to war, and Russia, which is a very cunning country, would soon find out the advantage we should give her by repealing our Corn Laws. She would wait a year or two, till she saw our corn lands out of cultivation in Ireland and England. She would then pick a quarrel with us, by invading our territory abroad in India, or insulting our ships, or doing something that she does not venture to do now.

Richard.—We should'nt stand that I suppose.

Rector.—We ought'nt. But here we should find and feel our folly in repealing the Corn Laws. If we let her take

some of our territory she would take all, and, if we resisted, she would immediately shut her ports, and not let any more corn come to England. No more goods would then be made in Manchester to be sold in Russia, and so, just as our children and all the work people were thrown out of work, corn would be so scarce in England that there would be quite a famine.

Richard.—Why so?

Rector.—Because there had been no seed sown, or so little sown in Ireland and England the previous autumn, and because we had relied upon Russia for that which she would now refuse. Could anything be worse than this? and what would follow? Why, that mobs would rise up all over England, and the Ministers of this country would be compelled to make peace on any terms, in order to keep the people from starving.

Richard.—Well, but, Sir, how comes it that people can be so foolish as to wish for the repeal of the Corn Laws, seeing it is to ruin us all in this way.

Rector.—That's somewhat more than I can tell. But I can guess a little at what is going on. The cry began as soon as the Ministers became unpopular, and thought they must loose their places. I dare say, therefore, that they employed men to raise the cry of cheap bread, and hired their Newspapers to write for it..

Richard.—Do the Ministers want to have the Corn Laws repealed, Sir?

Rector.—Oh! no. But as they have secretly encouraged the cry for repeal, in order to screen themselves from enquiry, they feel it necessary to vote for a change now, though they know perhaps that the change will do more harm than good. What do you think they propose?

Richard.—I can't guess.

Rector.—Why, to add ten or twelve shillings to the price of corn when it is high, the same as when it is low, instead of letting it come in when dear, duty free, and all this only for the sake of an alteration.

Richard.—Nobody would stand that.

Rector.—Nobody would like it certainly.

Richard.—But why do people let them try at it?

Rector.—There are many motives that lead men to

do so. Some restless persons are always for change, as if for changing's sake. Silly people often think it a proof of talent to propose a new law instead of an old one. Some men that are, what is called, quick and clever, have no common sense. Some persons have never read history. Some have read it, but without being able to profit by it.

Richard.—But, I suppose, Sir, nobody that has any land is for having it thrown out of cultivation.

Rector.—Yes, a few. At least they speak and vote for it. Whether they *really* wish the repeal of the Corn Laws or not, I cannot say. Probably not. It is well known now that several persons voted for the Reform Bill in the House of Commons, that hoped it would be thrown out of the House of Lords, or greatly altered.

Richard.—That couldn't be right. Why did they do so ?

Rector.—As now, to be popular with those that wanted what they hadn't got, or to please some Borough they represented. It was not honest thus to act against their judgments. But, Richard, men called demagogues are seldom honest, whatever their fortune or their station may be. Where they are honest, and mean what they say, they cannot be depended upon, on account of their want of sense as well as of Christian principles.

Richard.—Are any great folks—any Lords, for the repeal ?

Rector.—A very few, not above two or three.

Richard.—Why are they for it, Sir, ?

Rector.—I don't know why, Richard, and from their speeches, they don't seem to know why themselves. They are considered to be men of very weak understanding. But after all, this is not surprising. Let a measure be ever so foolish or wicked, it will always be upheld by somebody that you'd expect to know better. Even the French Revolution, the bloodiest, and most sinful that ever was known, was supported by many men of talent, and, though to effect Equality, by some persons of rank.

Richard.—Well ! They talk about keeping prices steady. I wish they'd keep their heads steady, Sir.

Rector.—So do I, Richard. But if you'll think over what I have said, you will see, that men that hate the monarchy, the church, the noblemen, the gentlemen, the farmer, the county labourer, the country tradesman, and the fundholder,

are now uniting together with different motives to repeal the Corn Law.

Richard.—Indeed !

Rector.—Yes. They well know that a repeal of the Corn Law would ruin all the higher classes, including the Queen as well as the Peers of England—make it impossible to employ the poor, or to keep up an army or a navy—destroy the clergy—drive men of family and present property out of the House of Commons—give the repealers an opportunity of seizing something in the scramble, and make the master manufacturers the only people that would have any money in the country.

Richard.—Oh ! Sir. I see now how it all is. . . How false people are !

Rector.—Yes, Richard, and where men are not moved by the feelings I have mentioned, they are of such a cruel nature that, though they cannot convince the country that a repeal would do good, they are ready to throw every thing into confusion, for the mere sake of an EXPERIMENT !

Richard.—What a lucky thing it is, Sir, that folks are having their eyes opened in time.

Rector.—It is so. Yet I meet with many people that seem to think there is no danger. You thought a repeal would do good till I had explained it. Didn't you ?

Richard.—Yes, Sir, but I don't think so now, and I can't think how I ever came to talk as I did. But who'd have thought of all that you have been saying ? I am sure I didn't. But I now see how foolish I was. Instead of standing to reason that it would be a good thing to have the Corn Laws repealed and wheat sold for 32 shillings a quarter or four shillings the bushel, I see it stands to reason all the other way.

Rector.—Well Richard. Then, since you are convinced of this, let me conclude by saying one thing more. I have never been anxious to see persons in your station of life, that have so little knowledge of what is best, signing petitions. But it has been said by the manufacturers, that the poor are desirous of the repeal, and that they are the poor man's friends. Under those circumstances, and considering that the question concerns you so deeply, I strongly urge you to sign the petition AGAINST the repeal.

Richard.—That I will, and I thank you, Sir, for the advice you have given us.

Rector.—You are at all times welcome to every advice I can give, and as your Clergyman, I will now remind you, while the cry of cheap bread is being raised, that it is not the only question of importance to the Poor Man, though a very important one. Remember who hath said, “man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Richard.—Ah! Sir, we had’nt ought to forget that,” and I think it would be quite as well if the master manufacturers that pray for daily bread, did’nt do as some of ’em are now doing. They should let the labourer have a chance of bread as well as themselves.

Rector.—They should, Richard, and if poor mechanics too would trust in God a great deal more, and in the Agitators that are trying to make them discontented a great deal less, it would be better for all parties in other matters as well as this. Many of those that are trying to repeal the Corn-Laws, are equally anxious, I am afraid, to repeal the Bible. But that, Richard, though a very serious subject, is another matter. So fare well for the present.

Richard.—Good morning, Sir, and thank you kindly.

The Clothing Club was now called over after which the depositors separated.

[As was at first intimated in an address to the Reader, a conversation upon which these Dialogues have since been founded actually took place. I may here add that, though nothing more was said upon the subject, the Labourers, with very few exceptions easily to be accounted for, afterwards signed a Petition *against* a repeal of the Corn Laws *during my absence* from home. Thus, out of an entire population consisting of 450 souls, men, women, and children, the signatures of eighty adults were attached. This fact is mentioned as an encouragement to others, to hold a similar conversation with the labourers, and to enable the Farmers to do so by some easier method than the report of Mr. M’Queen’s admirable statement, or even of Sir Robert Peel’s powerful, unanswered, and unanswerable speech. F. L.]

ERRATA.

In the address to the reader, at the beginning, for "statements formed," read "sentiments formed:" in page 5, four lines from the top, for "signatures of the labourers," read "signatures of their labourers."





